

Art for the Afterlife

Chapter House 'every life has a story to tell' Art Series.

Troy Upfield, founder of Chapter House Funerals, met Leroy on the streets a few months back. Over a period they often chat about the day's happenings and swap stories about each other's life journeys. Over conversation, Troy discovered Leroy's talent for painting and wanting to help offered Leroy to paint something for the walls of Chapter House.

It took a few weeks, however, Leroy eventually walked into Chapter House Funerals, and the quietly spoken Leroy said 'I'm here to paint'. Unsure what to paint and to paint on Troy asked Leroy if he would be ok to paint on a coffin lid. Apprehensive at first, Leroy agreed.

Leroy is self-taught as an artist. His is a familiar face in the village of Kew, Melbourne and is often to be found painting outside the supermarket. His strong, quiet presence belies his homeless status. Leroy's ancestors are Koori, from the Yorta Yorta tribe near Echuca, and he has an unbreakable bond with the natural habitat of his home as his work so clearly shows.

Leroy has painted the mythical 'Bunjil', his nation's Creator deity. Bunjil interchanges between Eaglehawk and human and has been portrayed soaring above sun-scorched treetops, yet reaching down through a sinuous root system to the eternal womb of mother earth.

Leroy tends to lose himself in the craft and demands of his work. With his tattooed physique but quiet nature, we find him engrossed in his subject. His painting requires fine brushwork. Attention to detail is apparent, but the result maintains a terrific vigour and vibrancy.

Since meeting Leroy, the idea of supporting community and artists has inspired Troy to invite others to tell their story. As an initiative to help, the Chapter House 'every life has a story to tell' Art Series has been created and offers local painters the opportunity to showcase their work in a unique format. Chapter House is transforming everyday coffin lids into unique and original artworks.

Chapter House has other works in progress from Chinese, Maori, Street Art and artists with brain acquired injuries. Each artist will have a feature video produced, and an open exhibition will be held early 2019 to showcase the diversity of art and culture each telling a story.

Leroy's story on Vimeo (photos available on request)

In this way, we are challenged to take stock and to remember the precious nature of life itself. In discovering these artists, we celebrate each other and share the fact that every life has a story to tell.

Chapter House is an attentive, family-focused business - a local funeral provider. The tight-knit company offers personal attention and sets out to support the Kew and surrounding Melbourne, community.

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